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# THE GREY VALLEY

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NICHOLAS DRAKE



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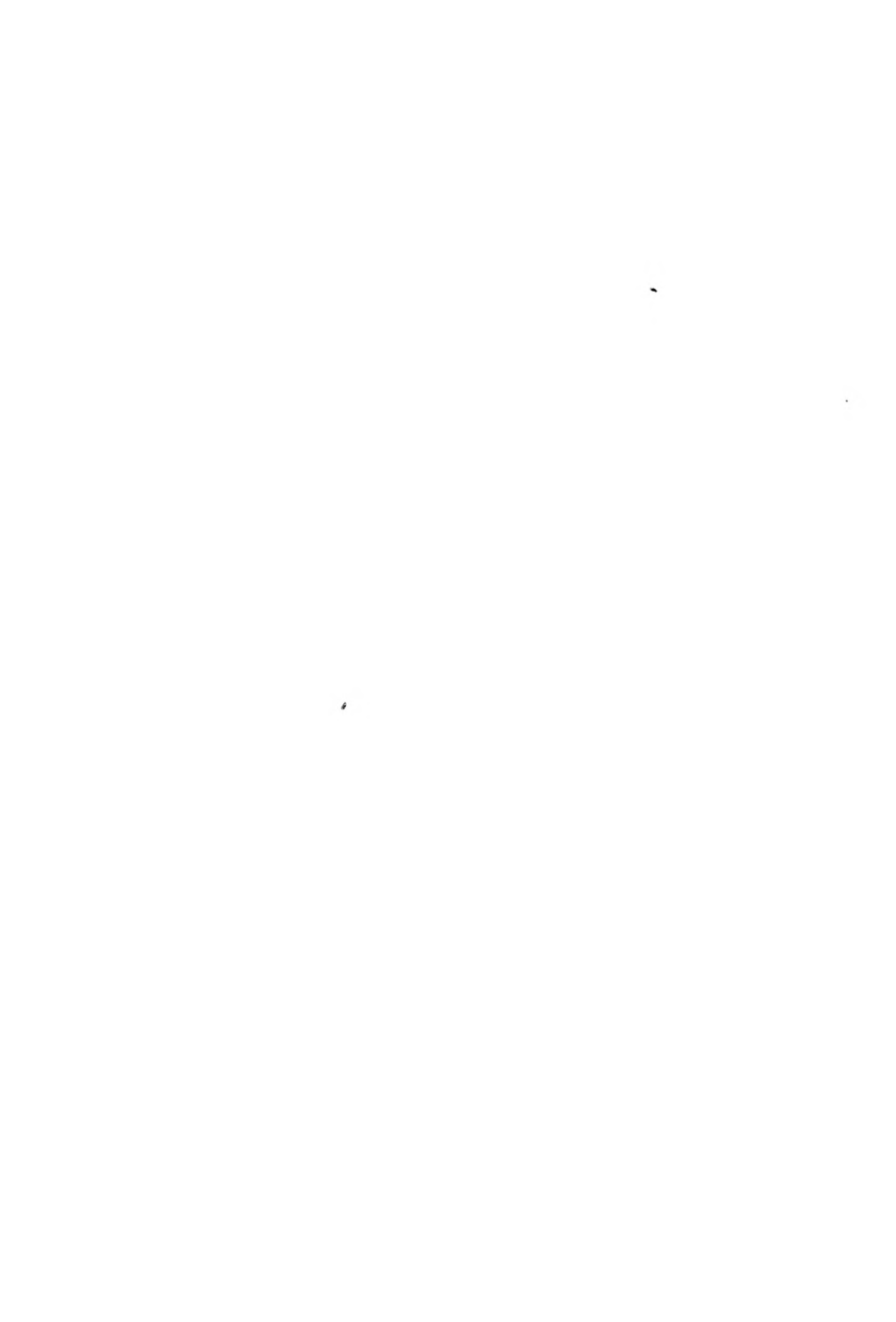
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# THE GREY VALLEY

BY

NICHOLAS DRAKE<sup>97</sup>

1921

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NICHOLAS DRAKE

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I dedicate this little book  
to my  
Father and Mother

## FOREWORD

The poems contained in this little volume, with a few exceptions, have previously appeared in *The Times-Dispatch*, or in *The Richmond Evening Journal*. Therefore, I have set aside this page for the purpose of thanking Mr. S. T. Clover, the former editor of *The Journal*, and Mr. H. E. Warner, of *The Times-Dispatch*, for their many courtesies.

NICHOLAS DRAKE.

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# THE GREY VALLEY



## His Voice

In sunset glow and in each gleam  
The stars portray at night,  
In every ripple of the stream  
That leaps to greet the sight,  
And in the petals of the rose  
Which nestles by the thorn  
There is a Voice which swells and flows  
To souls of men reborn.

They understand, the sons of man,  
And sons of God become,  
When turning from the sordid plan  
They hear in summer's hum  
The Voice which spoke in Galilee,  
Which told of life and love:  
For sights and sounds on land and sea  
Are words from God above.

**The House Is Still**

Aye, they have all gone to bed,  
The house is dark and still,  
And their thoughts of day have fled  
Away and o'er the hill—  
O'er the hill of dusky gray  
That into valleys fold,  
To the place where children play  
Who now are nearly old.

Yes, they have all gone to bed,  
The men who once were boys—  
And, perhaps, again they tread  
The field of youthful joys,  
And the frowzy pup leads on  
To Staple's swimmin' hole,  
Where no fancy garb is worn  
When leaping from the knoll.

Aye, they have all gone to bed,  
The house is dark and drear—  
But they list to sounds long dead  
That rise again in air,  
And someone mayhap, is seen  
As she stands near the door  
Of the gabled house of green  
Where once they lived of yore.



**Where Fancy Lives**

When night's bleak frost is in the air,  
And luna's sheen is bright and cold,  
I think no more of daily care,  
Nor feel the grip of toil's hold;  
For then I dream the dreams God gives  
To souls of men of work and play  
Who seek the place where Fancy lives  
On dusty shelves midst shadows gray.

Give me a book and quiet nook  
And fast I'll sail for old Cathay—  
Then on I'll go and gently look  
Upon the maids of Mandalay.  
As gales from north lands outside blow  
Give me a stirring tale at home  
And o'er the snow I'll gaily go  
E'en though I trek my way to Nome.

### His Scraggy Dog

The old, old mutt, the scraggy dog  
He left when he went away  
Goes the round of the old-time haunts—  
From the church to dance hall gay.

While merry throngs pass by, he stands  
With his head hung down, forlorn,  
And seems to say in doggish way,  
“My master and god is gone.”

A whistle he hears in the night  
That seems as his comrade's call,  
Yet, still it lacks a note he knows,  
So back goes he to his stall.

But he will find the one he seeks  
There, perhaps, in Realms of Right,  
When answers he the call he knows,  
As it comes through gates of light.

### From the Dead

You are the dead; we are the souls who live!  
O, comrades, save thy tears, thy laughter give—  
Tomorrow thou and I again shall tread  
The fields we love—but not among the dead!  
For life is mine, and I before thee stand  
A friend and leader to a better land.

They say we died; let this now be thy trust:  
The body's evil only turns to dust!  
Among the clouds of white and by thy side  
Live those who drink of life—the men who've died!  
So dry thine eyes, ye who are still in pain,  
And keep the faith, for we shall meet again.

**Song-Thrush**

Often I've heard the mavis-bird  
Singing the sweetest lay,  
Yet when I hear again each year  
His happy song of May  
My spirit fills with new-born thrills  
And free I feel and gay.

I love the rare enchanting air  
Pandean-pipes now play,  
And every tale told in the vale  
In memory-mine shall stay—  
But heard o'er all is the clear love call  
The mavis chants today.

### **The Old Man**

They saw not the smile within, nor the fire  
That burned behind his lusterless gray eyes;  
They only saw his age, his tattered garb,  
His battered hat and worn-out, shineless shoes;  
And when he passed the door they pitied him.  
I wonder why it was he pitied them?

**Easter**

The earth's bright carpet now is down  
And zephyrs sweep it clean,  
While overhead the tree tops spread  
Their gowns of tinted green;  
With rhythmic notes the air is filled  
As nature croons and hums—  
And pixies dance o'er earth's expanse  
When Spring's sweet spirit comes.

How well the season fits the day  
When He from death arose,  
And found the clime of life sublime,  
Free from all worldly woes.  
Because of Him all fears are stilled,  
Golgotha now is past,  
For visions bright of lands of light  
Belong to us at last.

**Throbbing of the Funeral Drums**

Another hero dead? Another

Soul fled from earth?

Dead? No!

His soul still lives, and

To us gives new strength

To meet the foe.

Back of the firing-line,

Back of the struggle comes

The sobbing and throbbing

Of the funeral drums.

Ah, mothers, those sons of you born,

Do they seem from you forever shorn?

You know they are not lost, but still

You murmur, "Gone."

Though it is miles away, she sees

The procession as it comes,

And she hears the sobbing and throbbing

Of the funeral drums.

I try to comfort her

And her pain to allay,

And she hears me not,

Yet she hears far away

The sobbing and throbbing

Of the funeral drums.

**Looking Forward**

Lift thine eyes, O, World,  
From ashes and from dust;  
Behold the flag unfurled  
In which the nations trust,  
God will be our guide,  
To lead to pastures fair,  
We know He will provide  
For us His children there.

Sheathed is now the sword,  
No more we view the night;  
Wreathed are the graves, O, Lord,  
We see the future bright.  
The grim past now is dead  
And there beyond the tears,  
Caused by the fields dyed red,  
Rise blessed future years.



**First Flowers: From a Persian Myth**

When Ahura-Mazdao  
Directed man to cut  
The breast of Earth loud cries  
Arose to the angels  
Asking intercession  
For Armati, goddess  
Of the Earth and giver  
Of increase; but knowing  
The Almighty wisdom  
Of Ahura-Mazdao,  
The Omnipotent God,  
The Giver of All Life,  
His glorious angels  
Sorrowfully refused.  
Yet Ahura-Mazdao,  
Seeing the pain of Earth,  
Hearing Armati in  
Anguish, determined to  
Compensate her, though He  
Would not alleviate  
Her pain, as men must raise  
Food by plowing the ground;  
Therefore, He took perfume  
From the pots of incense  
That ever in heaven  
Burn—which gives forth sweet smells—  
And, combined with carmine  
Taken from the setting  
Sun, made a wondrous work  
Named Flowers, and gave to  
Suffering Armati,  
Who, smiling through her tears,  
Clasped them to her bosom.

**Life's Pictures**

When life's pictures are painted  
And the last touches made,  
When we have toned the high lights  
And brightened all the shade,  
Will the good, loving Master  
Judge each work side by side?  
Or will He merely rule by  
How hard the painter tried?

Will He value each painting  
By the size of the frame?  
And before passing judgment  
Look for the painter's name?  
Or will He judge each painting,  
Will He the worth decide,  
By how well it is finished and  
How hard the painter tried?

### Summer's Eve

The hills that rise against the skies  
God's altars are and free,  
While swaying trees are praying trees,  
All bending reverently;  
And the notes heard from each wild bird  
Songs are divine in praise,  
Pulsing in air with that hymn rare  
The brook forever plays.

All nature sings of greater things  
Than those which mankind sees,  
For fancy's flight, too great for sight,  
Leaps to angelic keys;  
And he who hears the song of years  
On rippling nights in June,  
Up from the sod to greet his God  
Rises with soul in tune.

### Children's Time

Christmas is for children,  
As often has been said,  
And all the decorations  
So gay, of green and red,  
Are just to greet Saint Nick,  
Who brings the children toys,  
And nothing means to us—  
The grown-up girls and boys!

Children's time, children's time,  
O, surely 'tis the truth;  
It is just the time of times  
For carefree, singing youth.  
So let's put old age out,  
While bringing in the toys,  
And let us sing today,  
And just be girls and boys.

### On Easter Morn

This morn saw I pass slowly by  
A bier black as very night—  
No soul save I and a passerby  
Saw the grim and ghastly sight.

Turning, asked I of the passerby,  
“Why are no tears this morn shed  
For him who lies with vacant eyes  
Yonder, cold and dead?”

The passerby to me drew nigh  
And smiled as He clearly said:  
“Why should tears fall upon the pall?  
There Death lies dead.”

**Asrael**

Last night a beautiful  
Angel hovered o'er me  
In my dreams. Within his  
Hand he held a goblet  
Of gold, and his waist was  
Encircled by a small  
Girdle with a phoenix  
Embroidered upon it.  
My imagination  
Had never conceived the  
Thought before there was such  
A wonderful being,  
Even in realms above;  
Though often I pondered  
About the land beyond—  
Of Elysium I  
Incessantly thought—yet  
The fairest thought of mine  
Could not match the fairness  
Of the angel standing  
Before me . . . I questioned  
Him, "Who art thou?" And the  
Spirit answered, saying,  
"I am Asrael, the  
Angel of Death." Surprised,  
This beautiful soul was  
None other than the hard,  
Grim Reaper. Again spake  
I: "Then why come ye as  
One who brings hope and life?"

Is this disguise meant for  
An evil purpose of  
Thine? The cup of gold is  
Filled with a bitter drink  
Which takes the life of man,  
Perhaps." But he replied,  
"The golden vessel that  
I have contains precious  
Elixir." I pondered  
Awhile this strange speech of  
His . . . Then truth came to me,  
I cried, "Thou, Asrael  
Art the Angel of Life!"

**Faith**

Sitting on yon bare tree  
Sings the gay opechee,  
Thinking not of sorrow,  
Nor of snows of morrow,  
Thinking of life and love,  
    Singing there, without care,  
On the bough above.

Little bird, you shame me,  
With faith you inflame me,  
Today, I, too, shall sing,  
Forgetting everything,  
Excepting life and love,  
    For His arm saves from harm  
Those who look above.



### **The Thoroughbred**

When the cur is spent and torn  
He will whimper, beg and moan,  
    And he will lie on his back on the ground;  
But the thoroughbred doesn't know  
When he is licked by a foe,  
    And he will stand till the end of the round.

So, when you're bruised and you're worn  
It will take nerve to keep on—  
    But that is the test of a thoroughbred;  
And they will say you have grit  
If you don't grumble and quit—  
    If you don't lie down—until you are dead!













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